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Aids to Bible Readers.

THE FORESHADOWINGS OF THE CHRIST. IV.

By GEORGE S. GOODSPEED,
The University of Chicago.

Summary of foreshadowings already remarked.—The age of Isaiah, its historical events.—The essential elements in his outlook.—(1) Deliverance.—(2) Permanence of Zion.—(3) Peace.—Conclusions as to the foreshadowings in Isaiah.

V. FORESHADOWINGS FROM THE TIMES OF ISAIAH.]

IN beginning the study of the contributions to the doctrine of the future made by one of the greatest of Israel's prophets, it is desirable to gather up and recall those teachings of the future which have been presented in respect to the earlier periods of Israel's history. Gathered together in a somewhat summary and general fashion, these may be stated as follows :

1. The foreshadowings have gathered about the land in which the nation is to dwell ; its fertility is abundant ; its prosperity is assured.

2. The nation which is to dwell in that favored land is a chosen nation—one whose origin is of divine selection, and whose prospects are therefore full of hope. It is to be a people whom God shall particularly cherish, that it in turn may be the medium of universal blessing. It is to be a righteous nation. It is to be a conquering nation, going forth to victory until all the world shall own its sway. Its leaders are God-appointed and divinely disciplined for their work.

3. Its institutions are divinely ordered, and of special and peculiar significance and permanence,—the priesthood, the prophetic order, the monarchy. Each is pictured in glowing colors ; each has a splendid outlook ; each is to be the channel of unspeakably important blessing to mankind.

4. Behind and through nation and institutions appears Jehovah, the source and strength of them all. He is to dwell with the nation ; his advent and presence are the seal of all the promises and the promise of something greater than all.

5. New light had been thrown upon the future by the teachings of the prophets Amos and Hosea. To them the advent of Jehovah was one which betokened judgment rather than blessing. Emphasizing as they did the justice of Jehovah, they opened the way for the doctrine of his activity in judgment, not merely upon all others who were unrighteous, but also upon faithless Israel. Yet the harmony of the Jehovah of the past, characterized by his care and devotion to his chosen, with the Jehovah of the present, the just avenger of wrong wherever committed, was accomplished by Hosea through the firm conviction that the punishment was one of love, that the love which punished was still love, and therefore that forgiveness and restoration would follow. How this would be accomplished, and when, they did not clearly show.

I. *The historical situation.*—It is at this point that the prophecy of Isaiah takes up the problems of Israel's future. His prophetic activity gathers about two great periods:

1. The decline and fall of northern Israel with the accompanying political crisis in Judah in the reign of Ahaz (about 732 B. C.); and
2. The period of the invasion of Sennacherib, king of Assyria (B. C. 701).

The earlier prophets had already begun to recognize the tremendous significance of the king of Assyria as a factor in the life of western Asia, and had sought to interpret it in the light of their faith. In the year 743 B. C. Tiglath-pileser III began that series of western expeditions which sealed the fate of Syria. In this campaign the objective point was the city of Arpad, the key of central Syria. In 738 came the overthrow of the coalition centering about Hamath, at which time the Syrian states, including Damascus under its king Rezon and Israel under Menahem, sent tribute. By 735 the two kings are in revolt and join in an endeavor to overthrow the king of Judah, apparently with the purpose of compelling the alliance of Judah in the struggle against Assyria. Isaiah had already begun his prophetic work. His call as it is recorded in the sixth chapter has been dated in 737, and his sermons in chapters 2 to 5 follow within the next year or two. In connection with the war of defense against Syria and Israel he utters a series of prophecies which we find in chapters 7: 1—9: 7. The episode and declarations made here present Isaiah's person and purpose most clearly before us. In the midst of the frantic endeavors of the nations of western Asia to preserve their

existence as over against the Assyrian, and over against their petty feuds with one another, Isaiah calls for a different policy. Judah need not fear, either from Israel or from Damascus. Assyria will attend to them before long. Nor, on the other hand, need they whose God is Jehovah seek for protection with the Assyrian. In Isaiah's prophetic vision, to become involved with the great nation of the Tigris is not only to evidence want of faith in Jehovah, but also to incur all the misfortunes and disasters that accompany the supremacy of Assyria. If Judah will be content in reliance upon its God to keep clear of all foreign complications and to live in quietness, prosperity and peace will be its portion. This is the prophet's programme. But the king has already committed himself to the opposite policy. The Assyrian, therefore, as Isaiah sees, will certainly come and desolate the country, bringing privation, darkness, and destruction in his train.

During the thirty years that followed the Syro-Ephraimitish war a new antagonist of Assyrian oppression came upon the scene in the person of the Ethiopian king of Egypt, who intrigued with the subject nations of the West to induce them to throw off the yoke of Assyria and unite with Egypt in war with the nation on the Tigris. Unfortunately Egyptian promises were not fulfilled. The Ethiopian armies were no match for the Assyrian. The rebellious nations, relying on Egypt, were put down with a strong hand and with cruel punishment. Western Asia was a scene of turmoil. As one outcome of it the kingdom of northern Israel perished in 722 B. C. and its people were deported to the far East. Several Assyrian expeditions advanced to the very border of Egypt and severely punished rebellious Philistine cities.

Isaiah has left few memorials of his work during this time. He seems to have succeeded in holding Judah under Ahaz and under his son and successor, Hezekiah, to allegiance to the Assyrian. Chapter 28 appears to belong some time before 722 B. C. Chapter 20, dated somewhere about 711 B. C., illustrates a characteristic prophetic mode of enforcing truth and reveals Isaiah's insight into the folly of trusting to Egypt for help. It may be that in this period the events occurred which are narrated in chapters 38 and 39. If so, Hezekiah entered into an alliance with the Chaldean usurper in Babylonia, Merodach-baladan, and may have had to suffer with other rebels when Sargon brilliantly overcame all enemies in East and West. This invasion and punishment of Judah will have occurred in 711 B. C., and there are those who have assigned Isaiah's sermons in chapters 10, 11, 12, and 22 to this date. The evidence, however, is not sufficient to prove the fact of Sargon's

attack upon Judah, and these chapters more probably belong to a later period.

But even the genius and persuasion of the great prophet were not at last able to hold the somewhat weak king faithful to his oath against the pressure of the Egyptizers at his court. There is a change of rulers on the throne of Assyria—a signal for revolts in the dependencies. Egypt redoubles her efforts and Hezekiah yields. Unknown to Isaiah, but not unsuspected by him, a secret treaty is arranged with the Egyptian king. The yoke of Assyria is thrown off. What Isaiah thinks of the move may be read in chapters 29 to 32, which were delivered in or before 702 B. C. They have abandoned his policy of trust in Jehovah and quietness; they are depending on a broken reed in relying on Egypt; the devices of the politicians are well known to Jehovah though they seek to conceal them with all cunning; a terrible humiliation shall fall upon the city and nation as the outcome of all this folly.

Sennacherib came in 701 B. C. His onward march is pictured by the prophet in the brilliant description of the tenth chapter. In chapters 18 and 22 the terrible situation in Judah is also described. Just what Sennacherib's maneuvers were in his advance to the border of Egypt cannot be clearly made out from the varying accounts given in the Old Testament and the Assyrian texts. He certainly received the submission of Hezekiah, who purchased the sparing of Jerusalem with a great tribute. Then marching southward he felt the danger of leaving so important a place in the hands of a vassal of whose fidelity he could not be sure, and therefore, apparently in violation of his agreement, demanded the surrender of Jerusalem, sending a detachment of his army to secure it. The consternation which this move caused in Jerusalem is described in chapters 36 and 37, as well as the heroic stand of the prophet and the marvelous outcome. The thirty-third chapter has preserved a sermon which discloses Isaiah's view of the situation. Assyria, which is the rod in the hands of Jehovah, has forfeited its place by treachery, and Jehovah shall certainly destroy it and his people shall be protected and preserved.

II. *His view of the future.*—It is evident from this review of his work that Isaiah was profoundly interested in the political life of his nation, and played a large part in it. He lived in a time of great political disturbance. His place was in the court circle at Jerusalem. Like Elijah and Elisha before him, and like Samuel, the founder of

the prophetic order and office, he was a statesman. The religious truths which he preached were adapted to the political exigencies of the national life. If ever a prophet was intimately and entirely alive to the demands and tendencies of his own state and times, that prophet was Isaiah. It was in considering the future of the people of his day that visions rose before him which after generations have cherished, and which Christianity has been able to incorporate into its higher revelation.

His contributions to the subject that concerns us, therefore, are not only primarily national, but they take their special direction by reason of the strenuous and stirring age in which Isaiah found himself. They may be gathered up under three words: Isaiah declared that from all her difficulties and distresses occasioned by nations on every side Judah would surely obtain *deliverance*; he was assured in every circumstance, however dark, of the *permanence* of Zion; he looked forward after the struggle was over to a glorious age of *peace*.

1. Isaiah's doctrine of *deliverance* occupies naturally a large place in his utterances, for in the face of the nearer approach of the Assyrian, deliverance was the one thing which could encourage the nation.

(a) In his thought it comes primarily through Jehovah. One finds this aspect of it in every sermon. In this there is little more than what is offered by Amos and Hosea. An important phase of Isaiah's conception of this truth, however, is that to him the deliverance which Jehovah grants is seen *in affliction and disaster*. To the earlier prophet disaster means the vengeance of Jehovah upon sinners, and that being past, the brighter days will come. But Isaiah declares (perhaps not with entire understanding of the import and scope of his statements) that Jehovah saves *in* the punishment; that he is as really present to deliver in the calamity as he will appear after the calamity to restore and to bless. This might be said to be the first emergence of the higher Hebrew conception of the significance of suffering which reaches its culmination in the mind of the author of Job, and in the unknown writer of the fifty-third chapter of Isaiah. It is worth while to stop and observe the various shades of this conception of the prophet. In 4: 2 it is in the very day of the humiliation of the people described in chapter 3 that the land is in reality most prosperous and fruitful. The appearance of the symbolical name of Immanuel in 7: 14 and 8: 8 is coexistent with the dark and desolate experiences of Assyrian invasion. "God is with us," not after these pass away, but in them. In 9: 1-2 she that is in anguish is at the same time not in

gloom. They that walk in darkness see also a great light. The experiences are contemporaneous. The same doctrine lies beneath the various statements of the reversal of human conditions accompanied with blessing therein; so in 30:14, 17-21 Jehovah is to do a marvelous work in order to manifest his presence. It is, however, not merely a work of punishment, falling upon those who are evil, but the new conditions are to be felt as beneficent and glorious, though ordinarily they would be regarded as lamentable (*cf.* also 33:15-20). The doctrine appears in the most definite form in 30:20-21; there the adversity produces insight and piety.

(*b*) Another instrument of deliverance is seen by Isaiah to lie in the human sphere. His close relations, social and political, to the monarchy appear in his teaching that by it Jehovah will save the state. This interest in the monarchy he shares, as we have seen, with earlier teachers, and he offers nothing new or original in that respect; so, for example, in 32:1, 2. In 33:17 and perhaps in 28:16 he teaches hardly more than this. To him also the line of David is the true source of deliverance and blessing. With the sprout of Jesse in 11:1-5 the bright future is connected. Micah, his contemporary, develops the same thought in bringing the future King and Saviour from the old Davidic home (Micah 5:2-5).

A peculiar development of these general thoughts of Isaiah is, however, seen in the so-called "child prophecies," 7:14-19; 9:6, 7.¹ In the brilliant picture of chapter 9 the child who occupies the throne of David is to overthrow the enemy and to rule forever and ever. The names which are given to him describe a personage more glorious than any prophet has hitherto mentioned, except perhaps the writer of Psalm 45. Whether the famous Immanuel passages, 7:14-17; 8:8, are to be interpreted in the light of this passage as being the preliminary essays toward this more fully developed conception, or whether the child there mentioned merely offered to the prophet a convenient mark of time and symbol of the great new truth of "God with us" in the hour of darkness and disaster, is a question. The passages, strictly speaking, seem to favor the latter view. There is no definite reference in them to this child Immanuel as the instrument of deliverance.

¹ Isaiah 11:1-5 is included sometimes in these prophecies. It does not seem to us altogether clear that the term "child prophecy" ought to be applied to the latter passage, nor is the usual interpretation of 7:14-19, which makes "Immanuel" a deliverer, one which commends itself altogether to us. See, however, the article, "The Child Prophecies of Isaiah," by William R. Harper, in the *BIBLICAL WORLD*, December 1896.

Which of these two conceptions of deliverance, through Jehovah or through a human instrument, was predominant in Isaiah's mind is an interesting question, but one on which not very satisfactory light can be thrown. It is, of course, true that they are intimately related, since the human deliverer is only an instrument in the hand of Jehovah, revealing his power. Yet it is significant that the "child prophecies" gather about the earlier nucleus of Isaiah's prophetic activity in B. C. 732, while the conception of Jehovah as the source of blessing and hope is the persistent one in both periods, and especially prominent in the sermons preached during the Sennacherib crisis.

2. In the contribution of Isaiah to the doctrine of the *permanence* of the nation and its institutions, especially the religious foundations, there is also nothing essentially new; but the conceptions are more detailed and more definitely presented. It is remarkable how this notion that Zion will endure, that Jerusalem is not to perish, persists throughout all the prophet's career. It appears in one of his earliest prophecies, 2 : 2-4. It is involved, indeed, in his call, 6 : 13. In his last sermon it is maintained in a most glowing picture, 33 : 20-22. Connected with it is, of course, the idea of the permanence of the monarchy in passages of which a typical one is 9 : 7. In 4 : 5 Jehovah is to reveal himself in Zion in fire and cloud, and to spread over her a canopy for protection. In connection with the invasion of Sennacherib, 31 : 4, 5, the prophet teaches that Jehovah of hosts will come down to fight upon Mount Zion and will protect Jerusalem, deliver it, and preserve it. And in 33 : 13-24 the onset of the enemy has been repulsed, his armies have disappeared, and there rises before the vision of the prophet the Holy City, quiet, permanent, in which the majesty of Jehovah shall be revealed, where they divide the spoil, where all sickness has passed away. Psalms 46 and 48 are filled with the same thought. Whether written before or after the critical moment of Jerusalem's deliverance, they disclose the profound conviction that Jerusalem shall never be destroyed.

In working out the practical details of this permanence of the nation, Isaiah reached one of his most characteristic doctrines, that of *the remnant*. Here, again, he built upon his predecessors. Amos, 9 : 9, speaks of grain scattered amid the national chaff, and suggests that it has been preserved to be the seed of a new harvest; but his outlook is indefinite and general, as, indeed, are certain passages of Isaiah on the same subject. That the idea was most important to Isaiah appears from the fact that it takes shape in his call, chapter 6,

and that one of his sons was named "a remnant shall return." Again and again reference is made to it in his sermons. There are two points in which he practically contributes to the doctrine: (a) The punishment which the nation is certain to suffer is to draw out, to assist in forming, such a remnant. It is to be made up, not only of those who abide faithful in the midst of general corruption, but also of those who, by the evidence of the divine wrath and vengeance, shall be turned from their evil ways unto Jehovah. The punishment, therefore, is a divine blessing, since, in all these respects, it clears the way and prepares a nucleus for the revelation of the true Israel. (b) Isaiah is not merely content to announce that such a remnant exists, which will be the nucleus of the future nation, but in his practical way he sets about preparing it. The passage, 8: 16-18, is very significant in this connection. There have been those who have held that here is the beginning of the idea of the church, the body of selected believers. Without going so far as this we may see, in this new move of Isaiah, the first of those endeavors to realize in a particular age of the world the union of the more devoted and faithful of the people of God for the preservation of his truth, and for the spreading abroad of the knowledge of his name.

3. All the seers of Israel look forward out of their present, whether gloomy or bright, to a golden age of *peace*. Isaiah is no exception. He, like them, sees this new epoch accompanied by immensely increased fertility in the sphere of nature. The land of Palestine is to be the favored land of all the earth, and there the nation is to dwell in prosperity and peace. His own experience and observation, in the light of the times in which he lived and worked, determines for him more definite details of his own picture. The greatness of the oriental monarchies on the Tigris and the Nile were manifest to him as not to those who preceded him, and he perceived the comparative insignificance of the kingdom of Judah from the point of view of material resources. This perception determines the form of his vision of the future. To him Israel is not to be a nation conquering the world and ruling all nations with a rod of iron by the might of victorious armies. It will be delivered, indeed, from the tyranny of the enemy, however great his power may seem to be, but the peace which is to ensue is to be mediated through the efforts of God's people as teachers of the nations. This is the profound significance of that which stands in the forefront of the prophet's sermons, 2: 2-4. To the purified land swept clean of its enemies, to Mount Zion where Jehovah dwells, the

nations of the earth will come to learn his law, to accept his judgments, and as the result profound peace shall reign. Nowhere does Isaiah reveal his prophetic insight more clearly or gloriously than in the prospect he holds forth in 19:19-25, where Egypt and Assyria, the great antagonists of the people of God, shall be joined together with Israel in holy alliance. "In that day shall Israel be third, with Egypt and Assyria, a blessing in the midst of the earth."

III. *Conclusion.*—The following conclusions may be considered:

1. Isaiah's view of the future was supremely *national*. The essential element is the permanence of the state. This is both an advantage and a defect. It narrows his outlook, but at the same time it increases the intensity with which he realizes the future. It gives an outwardness to all his ideals, while it makes more vivid the colors in which they are presented. He had clear insight into the sins that affected the body politic and assailed them with irresistible force. The ideal of salvation was a purification involving the removal of social and political corruption. Law should prevail, justice should be done. A righteous state should come into being.

2. The future was bound up with the continuance and glorification of the *monarchy*. The line of David shall sit upon the throne and rule in righteousness and peace. We seem to be taken back to the days of united Israel. The dark prospect held forth by Amos and Hosea, who say so little about monarchy, is gone. This is again a limitation of Isaiah's vision. The prophetic order, the priesthood, have no place except as they are a part of the state and instruments of the throne. But the limitation is offset by the most splendid picture of the future monarch that prophet ever gave.

3. The days that are to come are days when *righteousness* shall prevail. The prophet's soul is aflame with this thought. Jehovah is for him the "Holy One of Israel." The present constitution of things must be shattered because it is corrupt. The remnant that shall come forth is to be holy. Nation and ruler shall have their right to be by virtue of revealing and exercising justice. The future world shall be organized around that principle.

4. Closely knit as are all these general attitudes of mind and this insight into realities to the elements of the life in which the prophet found himself, it is perfectly evident that he *transcended these* in his magnificent visions. He himself supplied, out of the hidden depths of his own communion with the Holy and Majestic One, a foreign, a

higher element. Throughout his long ministry he cherished and developed these greater expectations. Disappointed he doubtless was by the slow and painful progress which they seemed to make in the world, yet he never despaired. These visions embodied eternal realities for whose fulfilment ages were needed. Their form was temporal, and has dropped away, their significance is abiding. Immanuel, light in darkness, strength in anguish, the eternity and triumph of righteousness, the reign of the saints, the coming of the King, the reign of peace,—some of these the world has already come to know, for others we, too, still wait.